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Baker-Polito Administration Announces Over \$55,000 in Matching Grants for New Farmers

BOSTON – January 10, 2017 – The Baker-Polito Administration today announced matching grants totaling \$55,550 to help beginning farmers grow or improve their farm operations through the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources' (MDAR) Matching Enterprise Grants for Agriculture (MEGA) Program. Six farms in the towns of Amherst, Berkley, Montague, Sunderland, Swansea, and Westfield will receive grants along with business and technical assistance.

"Our administration is committed to supporting new farmers and their valuable contributions to the state and regional food systems," **said Governor Charlie Baker**. "New farmers bring innovative ideas and enthusiasm to the agricultural industry and this program helps ensure a sustainable future for Massachusetts farms."

"Grants to new and beginning farmers will help fund the purchase of equipment and infrastructure necessary to help sustain viable agricultural businesses," **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**. "We commend the six farmers receiving funding and their aspirations to develop their farms into commercially successful operations that provide fresh, healthy food to Massachusetts residents."

"This grant program not only provides farmers in their critical first to fifth year with some needed capital, but also supplies business and technical assistance to help ensure their continued success," **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton**. "Through this program, our administration builds on its efforts to preserve and support the Commonwealth's historic and vibrant agricultural sector that keeps Commonwealth residents healthy, helps the environment and preserves open space."

Through the MEGA program, participating farmers receive individual business assistance for their proposed projects, after which they become eligible to receive a grant of up to \$10,000 that they match dollar for dollar. This round of grants will support projects including a mushroom expansion project, barn repairs along with farm and hay equipment, grain storage, a livestock trailer and animal housing.

"I'm proud to report that since our MEGA Program began in 2010, it has provided a total of \$489,220 in grants to 58 diverse farms along with technical and business assistance throughout the state," **said MDAR Commissioner John Lebeaux**. "The MEGA Program is an important tool to help ensure the success of the next generation of farmers in Massachusetts."

The following farms have been nominated for grants:

Farm	Town	Project	Nomination
Fungi Ally	Amherst	Mushroom expansion project - phase II	\$5,550
Heart Beets Farm	Berkley	Farm equipment	\$10,000
Pelletier's Hay	Swansea	Hay equipment	\$10,000
Sage Farm	Montague	Grain storage, livestock trailer, animal housing	\$10,000
Teddy C. Smiarowski III Farm	Sunderland	Farm equipment	\$10,000
Yellow Stonehouse Farm	Westfield	Barn repairs	\$10,000

"Supporting local agriculture, especially new farmers who are just starting out, is critical for future success for our family farms. These grants will help build the necessary infrastructure for these farmers to create long term successful commercial businesses," **said Senate President Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst)**. "I look forward to seeing the bounty that these farmers produce in the years to come. Congratulations to all of the recipients."

"I am glad to see MDAR investing in new farmers such as the Pelletier's Hay farm. With this grant, Pelletier's Hay will be able to purchase new machinery that will increase farm efficiency and produce economic growth," **said State Senator Michal Rodrigues (D-Westport)**. "It is critical that we support the next generation of farmers in the SouthCoast and across the Commonwealth in order to preserve our community's rich agricultural history."

"MEGA grants are an excellent way of assisting new farmers in their efforts to make key farm improvements and make their operations more viable," **said State Representative Steven Howitt (R-Seekonk)**. "The Baker-Polito Administration and MDAR, through these grants and their programming and outreach, have once again demonstrated their commitment to supporting farmers of all stripes and ensuring a bright future for agriculture in Massachusetts."

"I congratulate each of these farms for their initiative and commitment to building viable and sustainable agricultural business," **said State Representative Stephen Kulik (D-Worthington)**. "I am also grateful to MDAR and the Baker-Polito Administration for supporting agriculture as an important sector of our State's rural economy."

For more information, visit the [MDAR MEGA Program website](#).

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DAR's mission is to ensure the long-term viability of agriculture in Massachusetts. Through its four divisions – Agricultural Conservation & Technical Assistance, Agricultural Markets, Animal Health, and Crop and Pest Services – DAR strives to support, regulate and enhance the rich diversity of the Commonwealth's agricultural community to promote economically and environmentally sound food safety and animal health measures, and fulfill agriculture's role in energy conservation and production. For more information, visit DAR's website at www.mass.gov/agr, and/or follow at twitter.com/mdarcommish.

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